2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

181 Arrogant towards other tribes, And
609 touchy towards their fellows, they seem to endure in silence any kind of treatment from a chief or a European.

181 To my mind their most attractive characteristics are quick sympathy and adaptability in human relationships, an elaborate courtesy and sense of etiquette, and a great polish of speech. A day spent at the Paramount's court is apt to make a European's manners seem crude and boorish by contrast. In ordinary intercourse the Bemba strike one as more sophisticated and civilized than the neighbouring Bisa, but much less sensible, hard-working, and efficient in managing their practical affairs.

Country and Climate.[1]

131 A glance at the Tribal map will show that the Bemba proper only inhabit the central portion of the country over which the Cibemba-speaking peoples are scattered. The natural boundaries of this Greater Bembaland are: Lake Tanganyika on the North, Lake Bangweolu to the West, and the escarpment of the Luangwa valley rift to the East. Only to the South is there no geographical boundary and the same type of forest extends almost uninterruptedly from Mpika to Broken Hill, 350 miles away.

• 133 The Bemba country is generally described as the 'Great plateau' of Northern Rhodesia. Crossing the country from the west to the east one seems to be moving over a series of tablelands tilted and bent into different shapes. Two or three days walk from the main escarpment to the East the general undulating character of the 'plateau' comes to an end in a succession of lesser scarps until one descends to the Luangwa escarpment proper. Natives are so impressed by this terrific natural boundary that they have been known to make a special journey to gaze down on the Luangwa valley from the *Mucinga Lubemba*—the 'great wall of the Bemba country'.

The country is very well watered. The divide is on the North-eastern side of the area. Streams to the east of this flow into the Zambesi, by way of the Luangwa, those to the west belong to the Congo system. The Chambesi, a broad still river that crosses the Bemba territory from the Northern border to the South-west is the most significant landmark in native eyes,

[1] Mrs. Gore-Browne drafted these first four paragraphs for me. *Vide* also A. G. Ogilvie, 'Co-operative Research in Geography; with an African example', *British Ass. for Advancement of Science*, Section E, 1931.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

a centre of historical associations and valued for its fish. To the South-west of the territory the plateau ends imperceptibly, and rivers running parallel to each other open out into ever widening grassy courses till they become merged in the Bangweolu swamp itself. These wide grassy margins which Europeans call *dambos* are characteristic of the rivers in this region. It is not unusual to plod half a mile of water-logged country to find perhaps a five-foot stream in the centre.

Forest trees cover the whole of the 'plateau' except where bare ridges, protruding in many places, show that the main rock floor is never far underneath. From the air the country has the appearance of an endless expanse of trees broken by numberless watercourses and dotted here and there with clusters of native huts and the small circular patches that represent their millet gardens. Natives distinguish three types of forest. First, the prevailing rather monotonous, semi-deciduous, bush forest, which they regard as their garden land: next the less common, tall, 'old forest' land, the relics of a more temperate climate. Here the trees of the upper story are perhaps twice as high as that of the ordinary woodland, so great is the contrast between the old and the newer forest. Lastly, when overlooking this country, one picks out deep patches of green along some of the river courses. These are '*mushitu* forests,' evergreen groves usually treated as sacred and often kept as the burying places of dead chiefs. They are peculiar to this country and are again survivals of a once ubiquitous forest evergreen.

These *umushitu* forests are the only parts of the countryside which do not change with the seasons. Immediately the rains are over—that is to say at the beginning of April—the grass begins to dry and turn brown. By July when the cold weather has well set in the leaves begin to come off the trees. By the end of August spring has come and with it the new leaf growth. As a natural protection from the hot sun, which immediately follows the month of early spring, the new leaves sprout in various shades of scarlet, turning to brilliant green as they grow. Each species changes at a slightly different time, and by mid-September the woodland is a mass of vivid colours of varying shades. This is cut short by the forest fires, and in a day the gay tints of spring and early summer are changed to blacks and browns. Even before the first rains of November the new green grass begins to shoot up along the river margins and the

considered here but will be discussed in a forthcoming section concerned with the peoples of the eastern shore of southern Lake Tanganyika and adjacent regions.

In brief, the Bemba-Lala-Lamba-Kaonde groups, with their closely related sub-groups, occupy almost the whole of North-eastern Rhodesia and the northern parts of North-western Rhodesia, besides adjacent areas of the Belgian Congo.

With the exception of the swamp-dwelling groups, the Unga and the Twa, all live under broadly similar conditions. Plentiful rainfall waters the generally unproductive plateau soils covered by deciduous woodland. The density of population which such land can carry is small, reaching only to about 12 persons per square mile, and this figure is not exceeded, or even approached, except in reserves where local over-population of a serious nature occurs, and in the swamp areas where inundation creates a land shortage either permanent or seasonal. The total population of the selected groups can be reckoned to be about 440,000.

GENERAL CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

The languages of these peoples are closely similar, so much so that the whole group of peoples in this area has been loosely termed "Bemba-speaking".(1) Guthrie, however, distinguishes within one of his linguistic zones *Bemba* with *Aushi* as a sub-dialect; *Tabwa* with *Shila* as a sub-dialect; and a further group of closely related languages, *Bisa, Lamba, Lala, Swaka,* and *Sewa.*(2) He places *Kaonde* in a different linguistic zone, L, because it has certain distinct features, such as a single prefix in independent nominals, which make it more closely related to the Luba group of languages. No mention is made of the languages spoken by other small groups closely related to the Bemba, such as Chishinga, Mukulu, Ngumbu, Kawendi, and Bwile. What little is known about the languages spoken by the Unga and Twa suggests that they may be closely related to Bisa.

There is apparently little linguistic evidence to support the tradition held by all these peoples that they originated in areas west of the Luapula from peoples of Luba stock, although Richards says that Bemba told her that archaic words they used in ceremonies at their Paramount's court were "Ciluba".

These people practise shifting cultivation with finger millet as the staple crop in the east and cassava in the west. The absence of cattle in the area distinguishes them from the Mambwe to the north and some of the Ngoni to the east. The greater part of the area lies within the tsetse belt, but Lambo mentions that cattle were used as marriage payments among the Lala, and a few goats and sheep are kept by the Bemba and probably by other tribes. Hunting was highly developed in the west of the area before the arrival of Europeans and hunting guilds and associations are recorded.

(1) Richards, 6, 1939, p.16, and Moffat Thomson, 1934.
(2) Guthrie, 1948. A zone is both a geographical and a linguistic concept in that the languages within it have both linguistic affinities and geographical propinquity.

4: Whiteley E-4 (no date) 1950 FQ5 Bemba FQ5
Senga

valley, and the substantial stockades of Senga chiefs on which Fraser[1] commented bore witness to the fear in which these raiders were held.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

As stated above the Senga inhabit the Upper Luangwa valley, at an altitude of some 3,000 ft. decreasing to the south. It is a region for which adequate climatological data are not available but the rainfall is probably less than on the Plateau with an average of 30-35" annually. The probable temperature range is from 65°F. (mean min.) to 88°F. (mean max.).

The soils generally are more fertile than those on the Plateau, especially close to the river, and are of a heavier texture and darker colour. A type of woodland (*Isoberlinia - Globiflora - Brachystegia*) common to the Plateau is found on the western banks of the Luangwa, but the valley floor and the eastern banks are covered with *Mupane* scrub-land, in which the trees attain a fair height near the river but are stunted towards the escarpment.

MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY

The shifting cultivation on the sterile soils of the Plateau gives way in the valley, potentially at any rate, to semi-permanent cultivation. Maize, finger millet and Kaffir corn are the most important crops, each of which is found locally as a staple. There are various sequences, from a millet-Kaffir corn sequence in northern districts to a millet-Kaffir corn or maize-groundnut sequence in districts in contact with the mixed Bisa-Cewa groups of the Middle Luangwa and on the eastern banks towards Lundazi.

In both sequences new sites are first cleared of trees and the branches and brushwood burnt. Later, in the first sequence, the grass which grows up in the clearing is cut down and left to rot helped by the first rain; this forms the seed bed for the millet - some maize had already been scattered before the grass was cut - and little subsequent weeding is carried out. Kaffir corn may be sown in the following year or, alternatively, in the third year after a second millet crop. A few pumpkins and cucurbits are also found.

In the second sequence, after preliminary clearing, there is less tendency to use rotting grass as a seed bed, but to leave it standing to manure subsequent crops. Millet is planted with maize and in the following year Kaffir corn and maize are planted in varying proportions in a seed bed of grass-manure left from the previous year. In some areas maize may be planted alone and a simple millet-maize sequence carried on for up to ten years. On lighter soils groundnuts may be planted in the third year.

Apart from this groundnuts are normally grown in separate gardens. Small gardens for maize in the dry season and rice cultivation are locally found, as is tobacco, particularly in Chinsali district. Village gardens are not properly found in the area but small plots of sweet potatoes, cassava, beans and pawpaw are commonly found near villages.

(1) Fraser, 1914.

5:Slaski E-4 (no date) 1950 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

Luapula Peoples

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133
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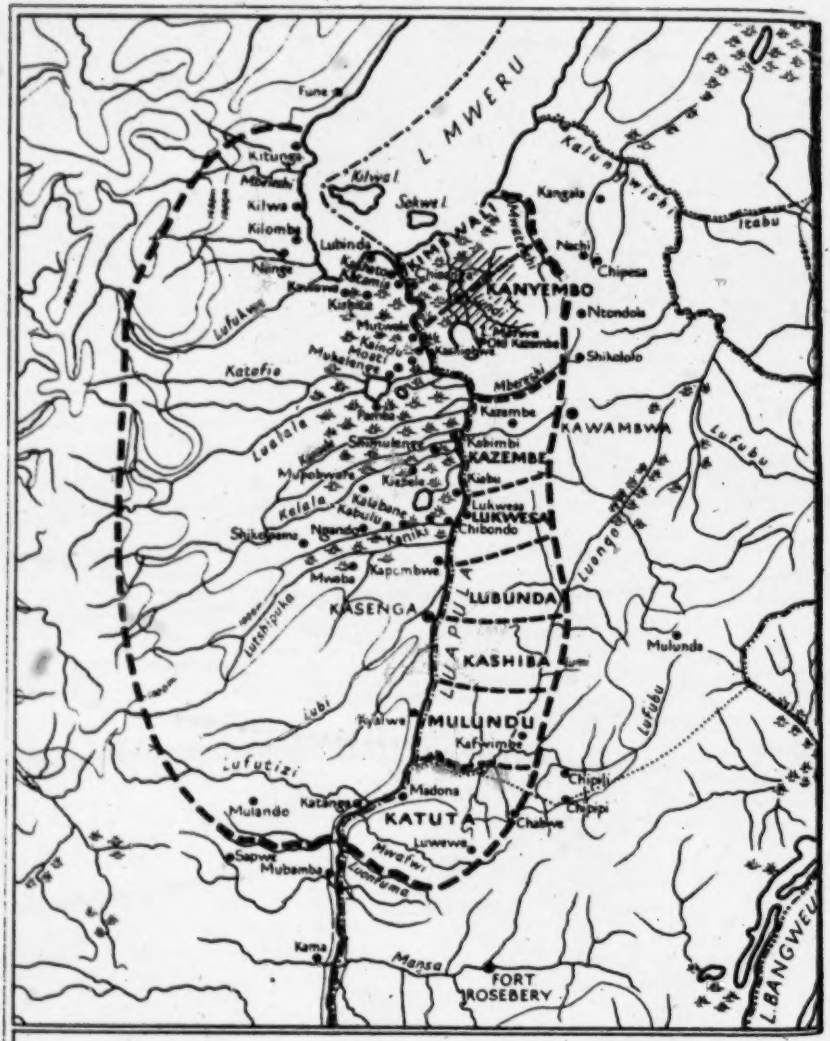

THE CHIEFDOMS OF THE LOWER LUAPULA VALLEY

— — In Belgian Congo: approximate limit of the Kingdom of the Nkuba.
In N. Rhodesia: approximate limit of the Kingdom of the Kazembe and of its component Chiefdoms.

////// Bemba colony

BOUNDARIES
International
Provincial
District

Scale 0 10 20 30 40 Miles

[facing p. 77]

175 Some Tabwa came with the British South African Company, and a group of Mambwe followed the missionaries to Mbereshi. From 1910 until 1922, when the villages returned to their old sites, the river belt had to be evacuated owing to the menace of sleeping sickness. The development of mining in the Katanga and the Copperbelt created a demand for labour and opened a market for the Luapula fish. The expansion of the fish trade organised by Greek refugees in the late 1920s stimulated a new influx of immigrants to the valley, many of them from across the Belgian Congo border. The present Kazembe, Chinyanta Nankula, is the fourteenth holder of the office.

LANGUAGE

197 The various dialects of Bemba (*Shila, Tabwa, Lunga, Aushi, Cinalunda*) spoken in the valley are not necessarily related to the tribal origins of the people. Cinalunda is a Bemba dialect with a slight Kampokolo admixture. The use of *Cilunda*, the language of the western (Congo) Lunda, and of its modified form, *Kampokolo*, (1) has never spread beyond the court circles. Both died out during the nineteenth century and now only survive [202] in the traditional praise-formulae composed for each Kazembe on his accession, and as the drum-language.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

133 Rapid-free and easily navigable in its lower course, the Luapula flows towards Lake Mweru at an altitude of some 3,000 feet down a flat, trough-like valley in which "sandstones of the Katanga system, granites and other rocks are overlaid by deep soil accumulations". (2) The flat floor of the valley rises steeply to the Chishinga plateau and more gently to the Kundelungu range on the Congo side. The river, in places overgrown by sudd vegetation, carries masses of floating papyrus. Except for a ten-mile stretch at Lukwesa and a four-mile one at Chisenga, its eastern bank is bordered by a belt of permanent swamp widening towards Lake Mweru. Sandbanks and patches of hard land are more in evidence down the western side. The swampy, seasonally flooded margin, up to ten miles wide, is studded with pools and lagoons and intersected by transverse channels giving access to the river from the villages. Flood-plain grasslands are burned in the dry season. The adjacent strip of fertile, alluvial land, not subject to floods, contains practically the whole population of the Rhodesian side. Further east, towards the escarpment, stretches for some twenty miles a bush-covered, almost uninhabited no-man's-land (*aulundu*) well stocked with wild fauna. Slow-flowing streams make their way down the open grassy *dambo* valleys to the Luapula.

132 The climate is of the savannah type with a single rainy season from October-November to April-May. The annual rainfall, lower in the valley than on the sheltering plateau, ranges from 36 inches at Chiengi (which lies on the Lake Mweru basin but outside Kazembe's kingdom) to 46 inches at Johnston Falls. (3) The mean minimum temperature at Chiengi, (the only records available) is 66.4°F. (4)

(1) Valdes, II, pp.228 and 243.
(2) Trapnell, 1943, p.1.
(3) ibid, p.2.
(4) ibid, p.3.

A grey-brown, richly humic soil, permeable and retentive of moisture, alternates locally with loams and sandy loams. The underlying ironstone beds outcrop in the bushland towards the escarpment. Large ant-hills containing lime nodules are a characteristic feature in an area of otherwise non-calcareous soil.(1) Livingstone(2) mentions hot sources "at which maize and cassava can be boiled" south of Kalungwishi. They are more typical of the country farther north. Among the *chipya* vegetation (mixed deciduous woodland with tall grasses and bracken), now predominant, there still survive on moister sites patches of dense evergreen thicket (*mateshi*), remnants of the equatorial rain forest which must have prevailed in the earlier, more humid regime.

MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY

AGRICULTURE(3)

Cassava, the staple crop, is planted on rectangular or, more often, round mounds which remain in semi-permanent cultivation with periodic fallows. Rotted grass turf is used as manure. Groundnuts and, in Shila villages, ground-beans, an important subsidiary crop, are usually grown on newer land. Balls of groundnuts stored in the trees are a characteristic feature in the villages. Sweet potatoes, maize, beans, pumpkins, Kaffir corn, are also cultivated in the main gardens. Cowpeas, edible gourds, and castor oil are grown as catch crops. Finger millet is grown for beer. Occasionally accompanied by bulrush millet and cattle melons, it occupies the thicket (north of Mbereshi) and, more usually, the small *citemene* gardens, measuring up to one-third of an acre each, on the clearings in the foothill woodland. These gardens, encountered more frequently among the Chishinga-Lunda than among the Shila, are abandoned after a few years' exploitation. Small *matimba* gardens under early maturing varieties of maize (consumed green), rice, bananas and sugar cane are made on the moist and very fertile acacia *dambos* east of Lake Mweru. These are more characteristic of the Bwile country. Rice plots, particularly exposed to the depredations of birds, are protected by bark rope birdscarers, and shelters are erected for the watchers to keep off the hippo. Pineapples, mangoes and pawpaws are successfully grown in the area as is oil-palm, which is common on Kilwa island. Tobacco, Asiatic and white yams, Lima beans, chillies, sesame, and cotton, are among the minor crops grown in the village gardens alongside the huts. Curcas oil is planted for fences in some Chishinga-Lunda villages. Irrigated wheat is found on mission farms and an attempt has been made to introduce coffee as a cash crop.

LIVESTOCK

Prevalence of tsetse fly, as well as the lack of pastoral traditions, were responsible for the virtual absence of cattle. Lukwesa (1760-1805) kept a few head of black cattle as a matter of prestige.(4) They were neither milked nor killed for meat and could graze where they pleased on the cultivated land of his subjects.(5) Lately the keeping of cattle has been

(1) Livingstone, I, p.247.
(2) ibid., p.270.
(3) Based on C. G. Trapnell.
(4) Burton, op.cit., p.129.
(5) Gamitto, I, p.390.